

When You Pray...

By

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(Emphasis Added)

Why do we bow our heads and close our eyes when we pray? God recently revealed something to me about this practice...that it is not what He wants us to do. It seems that once again human tradition has come into the church. Some people say that it is because people used to bow before kings in the earth out of fear, so they began to do the same thing in church. On the surface it seems that it is a good thing to bow our heads before God, but what does the Bible say about it and what does the example set by Jesus teach us?

Matthew 14:15-21 –

¹⁵When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, “This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food.” ¹⁶But Jesus said to them, “**They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.**” ¹⁷And they said to Him, “We have here only five loaves and two fish.” ¹⁸He said, “**Bring them here to Me.**” ¹⁹Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. **And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes.** ²⁰So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. ²¹Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.¹

Mark 6:35-44 –

³⁵When the day was now far spent, His disciples came to Him and said, “This is a deserted place, and already the hour *is* late.” ³⁶“Send them away, that they may go into the surrounding country and villages and buy themselves bread; for they have nothing to eat.” ³⁷But He answered and said to them, “**You give them something to eat.**” And they said to Him, “Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them *something* to eat?” ³⁸But He said to them, “**How many loaves do you have? Go and see.**” And when they found out they said, “Five, and two fish.” ³⁹Then He commanded them to make them all sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰So they sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties. ⁴¹And when He had taken the five loaves and the two fish, **He looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, and gave *them* to His disciples to set before them; and the two fish He divided among *them* all.** ⁴²So they all ate and were filled. ⁴³And they took up twelve baskets full of fragments and of the fish. ⁴⁴Now those who had eaten the loaves were about five thousand men.²

¹*The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.

²*The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.

Luke 9:10-17 –

¹⁰And the apostles, when they had returned, told Him all that they had done. Then He took them and went aside privately into a deserted place belonging to the city called Bethsaida. ¹¹But when the multitudes knew *it*, they followed Him; and He received them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who had need of healing. ¹²When the day began to wear away, the twelve came and said to Him, “Send the multitude away, that they may go into the surrounding towns and country, and lodge and get provisions; for we are in a deserted place here.” ¹³But He said to them, “**You give them something to eat.**” And they said, “We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless we go and buy food for all these people.” ¹⁴For there were about five thousand men. Then He said to His disciples, “**Make them sit down in groups of fifty.**” ¹⁵And they did so, and made them all sit down. ¹⁶**Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the multitude.** ¹⁷So they all ate and were filled, and twelve baskets of the leftover fragments were taken up by them.³

When Jesus resurrected Lazarus, how did He pray?

John 11:38-45 –

³⁸Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it. ³⁹Jesus said, “**Take away the stone.**” Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, “Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been *dead* four days.” ⁴⁰Jesus said to her, “**Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?**” ⁴¹Then they took away the stone *from the place* where the dead man was lying. **And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, “Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.** ⁴²“**And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said *this*, that they may believe that You sent Me.**” ⁴³Now when He had said these things, He cried with a loud voice, “**Lazarus, come forth!**” ⁴⁴And he who had died came out bound hand and foot with graveclothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, “**Loose him, and let him go.**”

⁴⁵Then many of the Jews who had come to Mary, and had seen the things Jesus did, believed in Him.⁴

The real ‘Lord’s prayer’ is recorded in John chapter 17. Let us look there to see how Jesus prayed...

John 17:1-5 –

¹Jesus spoke these words, **lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,** ²“**as You have given Him**

³*The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.

⁴*The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.

authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.
³“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. ⁴“I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. ⁵“And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.⁵

We can see from these scriptures that Jesus prayed with His head lifted up and eyes focused toward heaven. Why? Because that is where God is and He was facing His Father and engaging Him in conversation. If you were to go to an interview, would you look the interviewer in the eyes or would you bow your head and close your eyes? Whenever we engage someone in conversation, it is best if we make good eye contact. Then they know we are focused on the person we are conversing with. It is the same with Jesus and the Father. They are in heaven, so we should naturally lift up our heads and eyes toward them, so we can speak to them ‘face to face’. Naturally the devil does not want us to face God. He wants us to continue in the mistaken belief that we are unworthy sinners who deserve to go to hell and that is where we are headed, so we must continually beg God for salvation and blessings. The truth is that the devil is under our feet and that is why he wants us to bow our heads when we approach God, so we will be facing the enemy instead of God. He wants us to close our eyes because he knows good eye contact means we are focused on the One we are speaking to. Also, closing the eyes represents fear, not faith. Moses told the Israelites as recorded in Exodus 14...

¹⁰And when Pharaoh drew near, the children of Israel lifted their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians marched after them. So they were very afraid, and the children of Israel cried out to the LORD. ¹¹Then they said to Moses, “Because *there were* no graves in Egypt, have you taken us away to die in the wilderness? Why have you so dealt with us, to bring us up out of Egypt? ¹²“Is this not the word that we told you in Egypt, saying, ‘Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians?’ For *it would have been* better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness.” ¹³**And Moses said to the people, “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever.** ¹⁴“The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.”

¹⁵And the LORD said to Moses, “Why do you cry to Me? Tell the children of Israel to go forward. ¹⁶“But lift up your rod, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it. And the children of Israel shall go on dry *ground* through the midst of the sea. ¹⁷“And I indeed will harden the hearts of the Egyptians, and they shall follow them. So I will gain honor over Pharaoh and over all his army, his chariots, and his horsemen. ¹⁸“Then the Egyptians shall know that I *am* the LORD, when I have gained honor for Myself over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.”⁶

We can see from all these scriptures that if we want the miracles of God to manifest in our lives, then we need to focus our eyes on Jesus. He is in heave and we are down here, so when we pray, let us pray like Jesus did, with our heads and our eyes lifted up toward heaven.

⁵*The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.

⁶*The Holy Bible, New King James Version*, (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc.) 1982.

Many things are happening in the earth, which tells us that the end is near. The things that Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24 and Luke 21 are happening right now all over the world. Jesus said in Luke 21...

²⁵“And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; ²⁶“men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. ²⁷“Then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸“**Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near.**”

²⁹Then He spoke to them a parable: “Look at the fig tree, and all the trees. ³⁰“When they are already budding, you see and know for yourselves that summer is now near. ³¹“So you also, when you see these things happening, know that the kingdom of God is near. ³²“Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all things take place. ³³“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

³⁴“But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. ³⁵“For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶“**Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.**”⁷

When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray as recorded in Luke 11...

¹Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, *that* one of His disciples said to Him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” ²So He said to them, “**When you pray, say:**

Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as *it is* in heaven.

³Give us day by day our daily bread.

⁴And forgive us our sins,

For we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us.
And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.”

⁵And He said to them, “Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, ‘Friend, lend me three loaves; ⁶for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him’; ⁷“and he will answer from within and say, ‘Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you’? ⁸“I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.

⁹“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ¹⁰“For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. ¹¹“If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if *he asks* for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? ¹²“Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? ¹³“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will *your* heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!”⁸

Nowhere in these scriptures do we find Jesus teaching the disciples to pray with their heads bowed and their eyes closed. So we can assume that Jesus set the example for the praying posture, as we have shown in the scriptures above. So when we pray...let us pray as Jesus prayed...looking to God.

And one final point...the Bible does not teach us to say amen after every prayer. The word amen is used mostly when praising God. So, at the end of most of our prayers let us say something like, “so be it” or “so let it be.” That way we will be more consistent with the Bible and not the traditions that have crept into the church of God.

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